DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 216 707 JC 810 433

AUTHOR Manikas, William T.
TITLE Party Identification and the Southern Influence.
PUB DATE Mar 81
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual National Science Foundation Chautauqua-Type Short-Course Program (March 19-20, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Attainment; Employment Level; *Political Affiliation; *Political Influences; Political Socialization; *Regional Characteristics; Rural Urban Differences; Social Class; Socioeconomic Status; Student Research
IDENTIFIERS Democratic Party; Republican Party; *United States (South)

ABSTRACT

Studies conducted since the early 1950s have identified manual workers, low income groups, those with less education, and residents of urban areas as likely to be Democratic Party voters and those from higher income groups, the better educated, those with white-collar or professional jobs, and rural residents to be more likely to vote Republican. As a student project in a Gaston College political science class, a study was conducted in late 1980 to determine whether political party identification was changing in a three-county area in southern North Carolina due to changes in the educational level, income level, and occupational improvements of residents. Interviews conducted with 124 residents showed that party identification had not altered due to changes in socio-economic status. Most of the college graduates, those respondents with some college education, and upper- and middle-class respondents identified with the Democratic Party, while most of the Republican respondents came from the middle and lower classes and had a lower level of education. Most Democrats were in professional or white-collar occupations, while most Republicans were in blue-collar occupations. Finally, the study failed to support the assumption that rural residents identified with the Republican Party, and urban residents identified with the Democratic Party. (HB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED216707

PARTY IDENTIFICATION AND THE SOUTHERN INFLUENCE

William T. Manikas
Department of Social Science
Gaston College, Dallas, N. C.

For presentation at the Annual National Science Foundation Chautauqua-Type Short-Course Program.

March 19-20, 1981

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
William Manikas

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
✓ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

JC 810433

ABSTRACT

A pilot study, by a Gaston College Political Science class, was undertaken to determine if voting behavior of a small area in the South indicated a change in the section's party attachment. Income level, occupational level, educational level and place of residence does not support the notion that the "Solid South" is breaking up. The breaking up may have to await the invasion of northerners to the South. In The American Voter, Campbell et al. describe the northerners moving to the South as having a high-average income; two out of every five are professional or businessmen; and a third have attended college, and nine out of ten have at least some high school education. While they show little signs of changing party identification because of their new environment, their contribution to the Republican effort in the South is limited by their restricted numbers.

INTRODUCTION

In a democracy, voting is an act of choice among alternative candidates, parties and alternative policies. The American electorate has been analyzed by political sociologists in terms of identifying the characteristics of the voter and non-voter and comparing current voter turnout with previous elections. In addition, the American electorate has been extensively analyzed to determine why it behaves the way it does.

Each individual acquires his attitudes from varied influences on his thinking. Family background, education, income, occupation and religion all contribute to the formation of an individual's attitudes in general. The same is also true of his political attitudes. He may agree or disagree with more government involvement in education, business or labor. He may be positive or negative about a political party's program. Or, he may disregard politics entirely and concern himself only with the local football team. All these political attitudes are formed as a result of many factors.

PARTY IDENTIFICATION

As early as the 1952 elections, political sociologists were concerned with those factors that contributed to the voter's political behavior. Campbell, et al. in their study in the 1952 and 1956 elections discovered the importance of the political party in shaping electoral behavior.[1] Simply stated, it was found that most Americans voted for their own party's candidates. For example, in 1952, 99% of those who were strong Republicans voted for

Dwight Eisenhower, the GOP nominee, and 84% of the strong Democrats voted for Adlai Stevenson, the losing Democratic nominee. Overall, in 1952, 78% of all voters supported the presidential candidate of the party with which they identified.

Writing in 1961, V. O. Key, Jr. stated that "political parties occupy a prominent place in what we have chosen to call 'opinion-forming situations'."[2] He described the political party as both an object to which persons respond and as a tool used to see and to evaluate political objects. By 1958, political sociologists, through the technique of public opinion surveys, were able to discern the strong attachment between the voter and his political party. This tie is a psychological identification, which can persist without legal recognition or evidence of formal membership and even without a consistent record of party support. Most Americans have this sense of attachment with one party or the other. This is referred to as party identification.

Greenstein and Hyman have found that party identification is formed relatively early in life and by more or less nonrational processes, which produce an enduring sense of party attachment.[3] Key spoke of party identification as a tool often relied upon to help appraise new objects of attention on the political landscape.[4]

REGIONAL INFLUENCE

While party identification is an important factor of this pilot study, the study was undertaken to determine if voting behavior of a small area in

the South indicated a change in the section's party attachment. Unquestionably, the most lasting sectionalism in American party history has been that of the Democratic Party in the South. The painful experience of the Civil War and Reconstruction caused the southern states to reject the Republican Party and to support all Democratic presidential candidates from 1880 through 1944. Even Al Smith (a catholic) lost only four southern states in 1928.[5] Since 1948, southern Democratic support in presidential elections has faded. However, following the 1976 elections, all southern and border states, except South Carolina and Virginia, had Democratic governors, and all of their state legislatures were firmly controlled by the Democratic Party. In 1970, for the first time since 1901, blacks (three Democrats) were elected to the South Carolina House. After Richard Nixon carried all the southern states in 1972, there was speculation that the "solid South" had switched alliances in presidential elections.

A basic assumption of this study was that changing SES characteristics were partly responsible for the breaking up of the "solid South". These socio-economic status characteristics include social class, income, occupation and education.

Traditionally, upper-class and middle-class voters are more likely to be Republicans that are lower-class voters, who tend to be Democrats.

Professional and business people are more likely to be Republican than Democrats. Among persons in the highest income brackets, there are more Republicans than Democrats. Manual workers tend to vote Democratic, and low-income groups tend to vote Democratic.[6]

In addition, education is an important factor in influencing voting behavior. In the past, at least, college graduates have tended to vote for Republicans rather than Democrats. People with less than a college education tend to vote Democratic. For example, between the 1952 and 1976 elections, people with just a grade-school education voted Democratic in every election except in 1972.[7]

Another assumption of this study was that the "solid South" was breaking up because on the basis of population density and philosophy, it is rural and conservative. In the past, if one separated the South from the rest of the country, Democrats were more likely to live in central cities; Republicans in suburbs, small towns, and on more prosperous farms. While SES characteristics may account for part of the difference--that is, the more wealthy individuals live in suburbs--it is also true that crowded, interdependent nature of cities creates social problems for which there seems to be no practical solution except through government action. Crime, unemployment, poverty, traffic snarls, pollution and other ills of the city demand public solutions. The Democratic party, more the advocate of government responses to these problems, has been able to win the support of city voters.

Writing in 1964, V. O. Key, Jr. stated that "One of the most common foundations for two-party competition within individual states is that of the metropolis against the countryside."[8] This study was conducted in a three-county area in southern North Carolina. The counties included Cleveland, Gaston and Lincoln. As defined by the U. S. Bureau of Census, Cleveland and Lincoln counties are places with fewer than 25,000 inhabitants, and the inhabitants live in small communities scattered throughout the counties.

Gaston County, on the other hand, is defined as a Standard Metropolitcan Statistical Area, because it has a central city with fewer than 50,000 inhabitants.[9]

In his study of political parties, Key states that rural-urban differences were the typical pattern.[10] That is, more than half the metropolitan electorate leans in one direction, whereas more than half the rural population leans in the other. "Moreover, the urban-rural cleavage approaches in reality a group cleavage with urban-industrial wage earners opposing propertied groups, both urban and rural."[11]

STUDY RESULTS

Since this pilot study was a class project in my Introduction to American Federal Government course, the students were directed to go into their communities, and each was to interview five households in their neighborhoods. Except for a very small percentage, the students resided in Cleveland, Gaston and Lincoln counties in southern North Carolina, which are served by Gaston College (a community college). This study was undertaken to determine if party identification was changing due to changes in educational levels, income levels and occupational improvements, which in turn would partly explain the breaking up of the "solid South". This project was conducted during the first week of October, before the November, 1980 elections. While the purpose was to determine the status of party identification, a question was asked on the outcome of the election if it was held during the first week of October.

Altogether, 124 personal interviews were conducted by the students of the Political Science course. The independent variable in the study is party

identification. Besides the two major parties presenting their presidential candidates, there were several other parties that were attracting the public's attention, and one former Republican ran as an independent. Therefore, respondents were asked to indicate their party preference as: Democratic, Libertarian, Republican, Independent, Other. Table I shows that just over

TABLE I

POLITICAL PARTY PREFERENCE BY GROUPS, FIRST WEEK IN OCTOBER, 1980

Party	Democratic	Libertarian	Republican	Independent	Other
Total	70	3	32	15	3
Men	30	1	16	8	2
Women	40	2	16	7	1
White	54	3	30	15	3
Black	15	0	2	0	0
Other					

N - 124 Figures do not add up to 124 because of one no response.

one-half (70) or 56.5% of the 124 respondents indicated they identified with the Democratic party. The second largest group, 32 people, showed their preference for the Republican party, and 15 individuals declared themselves as independents. The remainder, three people and four people identified with the Libertarian and other parties, respectively.

In terms of education, traditionally, as the level of education increased, people tended to identify with the Republican party. Table 2 shows that regardless of their educational level, one half of the respondents identified with the Democratic party. Democrats accounted for 75% of the college graduates and 53.9% of those having some college education, while 16.7% of the college graduates and 16.8% with some college education indicated their Republican preference. This is one clear indication that the Democratic party

TABLE 2

POLITICAL PARTY PREFERENCE BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL, FIRST WEEK IN OCTOBER, 1980

Party	Democratic	Libertarian	Republican	Independent	Other
College Graduate	9 (75%)	0	2 (16.7%)	0	1 (8.3%)
College Education (1-4 yrs.)	36 (53.9%)	3 (4.6%)	18 (16.8%)	11 (23.5%)	1 (1.2%)
High School Education	20 (58.8%)	0	10 (29.5%)	3 (8.8%)	1 (2.9%)
Grade School Education	4 (66.7%)	0	2 (33.3%)	0	0

N - 124 Figures are to be read across the rows. Figures do not add up to 124 because of several no responses on this question.

is strong in the three counties surveyed by this study. A closer look will show that there is a larger percentage of Democrats in the college-graduate

group compared to those people in each of the other three education levels. There is a smaller percentage of Republicans in the college-graduate group and in the group with some college education, compared to the larger percentage of Republicans in the high school and grade school education levels.

In the past, upper-class and middle-class voters were more likely to be Republicans than were lower-class voters, who tended to be Democrats. Table 3 shows that at least half of the respondents in each income category above $10,000 identified with the Democratic party, while those who identified with the Republican party, no more than 31%, fell in any of the income categories above $10,000. More Democrats, 61.5%, fell in the over $50,000 income category compared to only 7.7% Republicans. More Independents, 23.1%,

TABLE 3

PARTY PREFERENCE BY INCOME LEVEL, FIRST WEEK IN OCTOBER, 1980

Party	Democratic	Libertarian	Republican	Independent	Other
Over $50,000	8 (61.5%)	1 (7.7%)	1 (7.7%)	3 (23.1%)	0
$40,000-$50,000	8 (57.5%)	0	2 (16.3%)	3 (26.3%)	0
$30,000-$39,999	13 (63.4%)	0	5 (23.4%)	1 (3.4%)	1 (10%)
$20,000-$29,999	24 (54.6%)	1 (7.3%)	13 (29.6%)	5 (11.4%)	0
$10,000-$19,999	13 (56.4%)	0	7 (30.7%)	1 (4.15%)	2 (8.7%)
Below $10,000	4 (36.4%)	1 (9.1%)	4 (36.4%)	2 (18.2%)	0

N - 124 Figures are to be read across the rows.

fell in this same income category than did the Republicans. In terms of percentages, more Republicans, 75%, fell in the income category between $10,000 and $30,000, while only 58% of the Democrats fell in those same categories. Again, in terms of percentages, more Democrats compared to the Republicans fell in the higher income categories. This is another indication that the Democratic party is strong in the geographical area of this study.

Professional and white-collar people, traditionally, were more likely to be Republican than Democrats, while blue-collar workers have tended to vote Democratic. The strength of the Democratic party in Cleveland, Gaston and Lincoln counties is demonstrated in Table 4. More professional, 31.4%,

TABLE 4

PARTY PREFERENCE BY OCCUPATIONAL LEVEL, FIRST WEEK IN OCTOBER, 1980

Party	Democratic	Libertarian	Republican	Independent	Other
Professional	22 (31.4%)	0	7 (21.9%)	4 (26.7%)	1 (33.3%)
White Collar	16 (22.9%)	1 (33.3%)	6 (18.8%)	2 (13.3%)	1 (33.3%)
Blue Collar	22 (31.4%)	1 (33.3%)	12 (37.5%)	7 (46.7%)	0
Retired	1 (1.4%)	0	1 (3.1%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (33.3%)

N - 124 Figures do not add up to 124 because of no responses to this question

and white-collar workers, 22.9%, identified with the Democratic party compared to 21.9% professional and 18.8% white-collar workers, who identified with the

Republican party. Contrary to the national figures, more blue-collar workers, 37.5%, identified with the Republican party compared with 31.4% who identified with the Democratic party. The largest proportion of the independents, 46.7%, came from the ranks of the blue-collar workers while only 13.3% were white-collar workers and 26.7% were professionals--a higher percentage than Republicans in the same occupational categories.

In addition to identifying the socio-economic status of the individuals in this study, their place of residence was identified to test for rural-urban differences. An assumption of this study was that Democrats were more likely to live in central cities and Republicans in suburbs, small towns and on more prosperous farms. Table 5 clearly demonstrates the lack of rural-urban differences along party lines. Democrats live both in rural and urban

TABLE 5

PARTY PREFERENCE BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE, FIRST WEEK IN OCTOBER, 1980

Party	Democratic	Libertarian	Republican	Independent	Other
Cleveland County	9 (13.8%)	2 (100%)	6 (18.8%)	1 (6.7%)	2 (66.7%)
Gaston County	20 (30.8%)	0	9 (28.1%)	4 (26.7%)	1 (33.3%)
Gaston County (Outside SMSA)	18 (27.7%)	0	9 (28.1%)	4 (26.7%)	0
Lincoln County	18 (27.7%)	0	8 (25%)	6 (40%)	0

N - 124 Figures do not add up to 124 because of several no responses.
SMSA - An area with a central city of fewer than 50,000 inhabitants.

areas of the geographical area of this study. The largest proportion of Democrats (30.8%) came from SMSA (area with a central city of fewer than 50,000 inhabitants) designated area. Twenty persons came from Charlotte, North Carolina, a city having a population of 300,000. The remainder of the Democrats resided in Cleveland and Lincoln counties, rural counties by population density and in the rural parts of Gaston county.

Republicans followed the same pattern. While 30.8% Democrats lived in SMSA disignated area, 28.1% Republicans resided in the same areas. The remainder of the Republicans, 71.8%, like the great majority of Democrats lived in places with fewer than 25,000 inhabitants, and the inhabitants lived in small communities scattered throughout the counties. The 15 Independents in this study displayed the same residential pattern as the Republicans and Democrats. All, except one of the remaining people that responded, lived in the rural counties.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In more elections since 1952, college graduates, professional and business people, and upper-class and middle-class individuals tended to vote Republican rather than Democratic. People with grade-school education; blue-collar and manual workers; and lower-class people tended to vote Democratic. Because of the bitter experiences of the Civil War and Reconstruction, voters in the South rejected the Republican party and voted heavily in favor of the Democratic party.

Since the 1960 elections, there appeared to be a break-up in the "solid South". In this study, Gaston and Lincoln counties voted for the Republican

candidates in three of the five elections between 1960 and 1976, while in Cleveland county, the electorate voted for the Democratic candidate in three of the five elections. This study was undertaken to determine if party identification was changing due to changes in educational levels, income levels and occupational careers.

The results show that party identification in the three counties has not altered due to changes in the socio-economic status of the people. Most of the college graduates, college educated and upper-class and middle-class people identified with the Democratic party (Tables 2 & 3). On the other hand, most of the Republicans came from the middle-class and lower-class and from those groups of people having an education level between high school graduation and fourth year of college.

In terms of occupational level, most Democrats came from the professional and white collar occupational categories, while most Republicans came from the white-collar and blue-collar categories. The largest proportion of Republicans (Table 4) came from the blue-collar category.

Table 5 does not support the assumption of rural-urban differences. Gaston county, alone of the three counties, had a central city of fewer than 50,000 inhabitants. While 30.8% of the Democrats lived inside the central city of Gastonia, a near equal proportion, 27.7%, lived outside the central city. Both rural and urban areas of the three counties were dominated by the Democrats.

Income level, occupational level, educational level and place of residence does not support the notion that the "solid South" is breaking up.

The breaking up may have to await the invasion of northerners to the South. In The American Voter, Campbell et al. describe the northerners moving to the South as having a high average income; two of every five are professional or businessmen; and a third have attended college and nine out of ten have at least some high school education.[12] While they show little signs of changing party identification because of their new environment, their contribution to the Republican effort in the South is limited by their restricted numbers.

NOTES

1. Angus Campbell et al., The American Voter (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1964), p. 81.

2. V. O. Key, Jr., Public Opinion and American Democracy (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), p. 243.

3. Joseph C. Palamountain, Jr., Voting, Interest Groups and Parties "Scott, Foresman's American Government Reading Series," Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1966), p. 31.

4. Key, Jr., op. cit., p. 244.

5. David C. Saffell, The Politics of American National Government (3rd ed.; Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop Publishers, Inc., 1978) p. 139.

6. Milton C. Cummings, Jr. and David Wise, Democracy Under Pressure (3rd ed.; New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1977), p. 304.

7. Gallup Poll (November 1968, December 1968, December 1972 and December 1976).

8. V. O. Key, Jr., Politics, Parties & Pressure Groups (5th ed.; New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1964), p. 295.

9. North Carolina State Government Statistical Abstract (4th ed.; Raleigh, N. C.: Division of State Budget and Management, 1979), p. XXV.

10. Key, Jr., op. cit., p. 295.

11. Ibid.

12. Campbell et al., op cit., p. 236.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Campbell, Angus, et al. The American Voter. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1964.

Cummings, Jr., Milton and Wise, David. Democracy Under Pressure. 3rd ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1977.

Hill, David and Luttbeg, Norman. Trends in American Electoral Behavior. Itasca, Ill.: F. E. Peacock Publishers, Inc., 1980.

Key, Jr., V. O. Politics, Parties and Pressure Group. 5th ed. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1964.

Key, Jr., V. O. Public Opinion and American Democracy. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961.

_____. North Carolina State Government Statistical Abstract. 4th ed. Raleigh, N. C.: Division of State Budget and management, 1979.

Palamountain, Jr., Joseph. (ed.). Voting, Interest Groups and Parties. Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foreman and Company, 1966.

Saffell, David. The Politics of American National Government. 3d ed. Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop Publishers, Inc., 1978.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
ERIC® CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGES
96 POWELL LIBRARY BUILDING
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90024
EE 54

JUL 16 1982